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ASSYRIAN KARÂRU 'TO WIND' AND PILURTU 'TABLET'

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According to Delitzsch (HW, 355^b) karâru means 'to tear down,' while according to Meissner (*Supplement*, p. 50) it means 'to build up.' In view of such radical divergence between these two lexicographers, some further study of the word in question would seem to be called for. The key to the meaning of the stem is readily furnished by Arabic, where we have *karra* 'to be wound' (of a thread), and 'to wheel' in a military sense, while *karrara* means 'to repeat,' properly 'to come around frequently.' *Karr^{am}* means 'a cable,' and also 'a mat,' in either case something wound, or twisted round and round. *Kurreh* is 'a ball,' and *karârîjeh* is 'a reel, or bobbin.' From these examples it is easy to see that the primitive meaning of the stem must be 'to be round, to go round' or something similar. Applying this to Assyrian, the same development of meaning appears there also. *Karru*,¹ for example, means 'the pommel of a sword,' the ball at the upper end of the hilt, and so we have (Meissner, *Supplement*, p. 51) the title ^{am}naš paṭri karri, 'wearing a sword with a pommel,' or, as Meissner well renders it, 'Kugelgriff,' and according to Sennacherib, Alabaster in the days of his royal predecessors, ana karrê namṣari šûquru 'was precious (enough) for sword pommels' (DHW, 356^a). Assyrian building inscriptions often mention sikkât karri 'ball pegs,' i.e., pegs or nails with ornamental heads of some polished metal.² Originally having round heads as the designation karri would imply, the same name would later be applied to all pegs with ornamental heads, whether round or not.

Karru 'garment' (DHW, 356^a) is properly 'a wrap,' something that goes, or is wound, round about a man, and in this sense we have the permansive of the verb in the phrase paṭrâte parzilli karrû 'they are girt with swords of steel' (H. 473, rev. 10. 14). By a very

¹ *Karru* 'devastation, desolation' seems to come not from the stem כרר but from קרר 'to burn' (DHW, 597^b); it should be written qarru.

² Numerous examples are given under sikkatu, DHW, 497^b.

easy step the verb means also 'to wear,' e.g. *issurri zûtu šarru ikárar ina kišâdi-šu likrur*. 'If the King wears a zûtu³ let him wear (it) about his neck' (H. 391, rev. 14-18); *atta tattemî kî kunukki, ina libâni-ka taktárar-šu* 'thou art like a seal, which thou wearest upon thy breast' (H. 1042, obv. 5-6). *Libânu* is to be compared to the Arabic *labân* 'breast,' and the meaning thus obtained suits the context very well. Another passage for *karâru* in the sense of 'to wear' is H. 312, obv. 10-12: *nâru da'na, lâ ana smmaškirê karâri illaka, lâ ana smkalake* 'the river is strong; it is suitable neither for wearing swimming skins, nor for keleks.'⁴

From the meaning 'to wrap,' readily comes the idea of fastening together, binding, making firm; indeed, Meissner points out (*Supplement*, p. 51) that in a syllabary *karâru* occurs in parallelism with *rakâsu* 'to bind.' In reference to building operations, especially in connection with *uššû* 'foundation,' *karâru* is of frequent occurrence. E.g., *^{ab}anpûlu ša ina libbi uššê ša dûri ša ^{a1}Tarbiçi nikrurû-ni* 'we have laid (properly, made firm) the stone in the foundation of the city wall of Tarbiç,' (H. 628, obv. 6-7). The Eponym canon B has, for the year 789 B.C., the note: *uššû ša bît Nabû ša Ninâ karrû* 'the foundation of the temple of Nabû at Nineveh was laid,' and in 788, *Nabû ana bîti ešši etárab* 'Nabû entered the new temple' (BA, I, 616; DHW, 355^b). Delitzsch (*loc. cit.*) thinks that the foundations of an old temple were demolished, to make room for the new temple. But as *karâru* means 'to construct,' not 'to demolish,' the passage would appear to mean that the foundation was laid in 789 B.C. and that a year later (788 B.C.) the temple was finished and ready to be occupied by the god. A report to the king regarding the condition of the queen's house is as follows: *bitu uptaṭṭir, bît uššê pâte uššê ana karâri libnâte karmat, šumma šarru bêlî iqábî ana rab smMuttaggišê ṭêmu liškunû, lillika uššê likrur* 'the house is cracked, the foundation inside and outside is so broken that the bricks must be (re)laid. If the king approves let an order be given to the

³Some object connected with magical manipulation. See also H. 43, obv. 11-12; H. 363, rev. 6-8.

⁴See my remarks on this passage in *AJSL*, XXVII, 187

rab muttaggišê, that he may come and lay the foundation' (H. 389, obv. 10–rev. 6). I take bît here (in bît uššê) in the sense of the Hebrew בֵּית 'inside,' while pâte, properly 'front,' can very well mean 'outside.' Elsewhere bît uššê seems to mean, 'cellar,' and in H. 476, rev. 11–13 we have: ešrête ša Dûr-îli ištu bît uššê karrû-ni 'the temples of Dûr-îli are built from the cellar (up).' Still another illustration is found in H. 471, obv. 21: aqtebâ-šu muk alká-ma issiia ina muxxi karâri ša uššê 'I said to him, come with me to lay the foundation,' and (*ibid.*, rev. 7): uššê lâ nikárar 'we shall not lay the foundation.' In some cases karâru is employed in a sense very similar to its original meaning. For example, in the astronomical text H. 407, obv. 8–11, we have: attalû ištu šadî issaxad, ina muxxi amurri gabbu iktárar 'the eclipse rises in the east, and goes round altogether to the west.' In another text an official writes to the king: Kî šarru bêlu ^{al} Aššur uzakkû-ni, ilku ša ^{al} Aššur ina muxxiia karirû-ni, anâku batqu ša ekalli ša ^{al} ekallâti akâsar 'since the king has made Aššur a free town, and the control (?) of Aššur has devolved (literally, come around) upon me, I have been repairing the damage to the palace of the city of Ekallâti' (H. 99, rev. 6–9). Still another example is: ina pâni adágal, enâ ina muxxi aktárar 'I am waiting, I turn my eyes thereon' (BA, II, 629, ll. 29–30). From the idea of fastening, making firm, etc., karâru comes to have the more general meaning of 'to fix, place,' etc. E.g., ina muxxi karâri ša çillibâni 'with regard to the application of sweet-wood,' as a remedy for disease (H. 19, obv. 5–6; Behrens, *Briefe*, p. 90). parku ina muxxi abi'a aktárara 'I have locked up (literally, put a bolt on) my father' (H. 132, rev. 4–5). With regard to religious ceremonies we have: paššûru ša Šamaš atâ takárara 'See! thou shalt lay the table of Shamash' (H. 611, obv. 5); again, eršu ikárurû 'they (indef.) shall set up a bed' (BA, II, 635, 1); and similarly: ^{al} Kalxi eršu ša Nabû takkárar, Nabû ina bît erši irrab 'at Kelach the bed of Nabû will be set up, (and) Nabû will enter the bed chamber (H. 65, obv. 7–9). As a further example of karâru in the sense of to fix, place, etc., may be cited: mannu ša ina muxxi-ni illak-ni, ina qašti nikárar-šu 'whosoever comes to us we enroll (literally, put) him in the troop' (H. 727, rev. 9–11). qaštu 'bow,' in the sense

of 'bowman' and then of 'force, troop' in general, is of such common occurrence that it can hardly need illustration here. Kârâru also occurs in a number of passages where the context is either obscure or mutilated, but the examples already cited will probably be sufficient to illustrate the origin and development of the word's meaning.

pilurtu 'tablet'

The rather rare word pilurtu is explained by Meissner (ZA, XVII, 248) as meaning 'seal-cylinder,' but a meaning like 'tablet' would seem to suit the passages better. In H. 408, rev. 4-10, we have: šarru bêlî udâ kî ^{al}Arzuxina ina libbi ^{gis}pilurte karirû-ni mardîtu ištu ^{al}Urzuxina adî ^{al}Arakdi ana umâmê tada'in 'know, my lord the king, (that) though the city of Arzukhina is put down on the schedule (literally, tablet), the road from Urzukhina to Arakdi is too difficult for beasts of burden.' The writer is making a report on a certain post road, and pilurtu seems to mean here the tablet containing the schedule of the route. Arzukhina and Urzukhina are apparently the same place. Another passage occurs H. 434, rev. 12-14: ištu pî-šu liškun ina libbi ^{aban} ^{gis}pilurte, liknuku 'let him set down his statement on a tablet, (and) let him seal (it).' Here ištu pî must have the same meaning as ša pî. Finally, we have, H. 628, rev. 6-8: ina bît kutalli ina pân šarri usserib-šunu ^{gis}pilurat issaknû-šunu 'he brought them into the private chamber (?) into the king's presence and they (pl. indef.) put them (on) the list.' bît kutalli properly 'side house, or chamber' seems to have been a sort of private audience chamber where the king received certain individuals. As it has the determinative GIŠ, pilurtu was doubtless originally a wooden tablet, but the word later came to be used for a tablet of other materials.' It will be observed that in the passage from H. 434, cited above, two determinatives are used, TAK (aban) and GIŠ.